

TRANSCRIPTION

Governor Mark Dayton interview with Minnesota Public Radio, March 24, 2015.
"Dayton's full comments on wild rice and U.S. Steel"

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<http://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/03/24/dayton-water-standard>

INTERVIEWER (Tom Scheck) How are you managing this [inaudible] with U.S. Steel and with the Range and MPCA?

DAYTON: The unfortunate facts are that the steel industry is in a very, very precarious position here in Minnesota and nationally, with huge imports of foreign steel and ore and a lack of willingness of our government— it's been this way for thirty years, or longer—to really stand up and protect our jobs and protect our interests.

Senator Franken . . . I convened a call last week with Senator Franken and Senator Klobuchar and Representative Nolan of the Range delegation, and others who, all of whom are alarmed at this and trying to meet with either the president or the trade ambassador or both to really highlight how urgent this situation is. But U.S. Steel has made it very clear they're not going to — and they closed down the Keewatin plant, they're still operating the Minntac plant — but they made it very clear they're not going to agree to a permit that has the standard of 10 [10 milligrams per liter] which was set in, by science — was posted in 1940, and established in the 1960s and 70s as the standard, which is not applied to most other projects in Minnesota or anywhere else in the country.

So MPCA is going to be coming out shortly with a way of taking the updated scientific information and applying that to protecting the wild rice in the waters, which we certainly want to do, but it's got to be done in a way that is based on current science and current information, and not something's that's antiquated. We could talk with the EPA about collaborating with us and doing that, and going through a public process to work that out, and some people will say, "Well, you know you're going to abandon this standard," but if the standard is obsolete, and is not validated by current science and information, then to stick with it and close down an industry is really ill-advised.

INTERVIEWER: Do the scientists at MPCA agree with that?

DAYTON: Well, I'm waiting for them to come out with their analysis and what their views are, but the most recent reports that come out—I'm not an expert on this, but—we have a standard for *sulfate* of 10. Well, the science, as I understand it, says that it's not *sulfate* that is harmful to wild rice or to humans, the limit for human consumption of *sulfate* is 2500, so clearly we're in a different universe in that regard, but *sulfide*, which is—some of the sulfate is converted into sulfide, if I

remember my college chemistry—that's where there's, you know, deleterious effects. But there are other factors.

Sulfate does not correlate directly to sulfide, there are other factors and the like and the fact is we've got a lot of wild rice in Minnesota that is reasonably healthy. We have some areas that have, the production is less than it was before, and you could argue that's caused by some environmental factor, but it's like everything else, it's complicated and complex, and so we need to take what the current understanding is of the factors that are involved in creating the current situation applied that modern science and modern understanding to a situation where you get—If you have an impossibly low standard that doesn't correlate with the problem you're trying to solve anyway, then you've put a whole industry out of business.

We don't even know if that's going to improve wild rice conditions. And certainly it's going to be catastrophic for life up in northeastern Minnesota. We're trying to find a balance. And people are going to be on the side of, "You don't do everything we want you to do, and do it exactly the way we want you to do it, so you're trying to destroy the planet." Well, tee-off on this. But hopefully wisdom and common sense will prevail.

INTERVIEWER: You're ready for the criticism of environmentalists that say you're just kowtowing to the industry, right?

DAYTON: I'm not kowtowing to anybody. I'm standing up for what, again, I think is best for Minnesota, and to have a standard this antiquated, that is not even based on current science or directly related to the conditions that we're trying to deal with, to me doesn't make any sense. But again, people who have a rigid ideology and don't accept anything that deviates from that, are going to be unhappy, but you can't apply a standard that you know is incorrect, to a modern situation, with any integrity.